United Nations A/C.5/54/SR.4

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session
Official Records

Distr.: General
13 December 1999
English
Original: Spanish

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 4th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 4 October 1999, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Ms. Wensley ..... (Australia)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

Contents

Agenda item 169: Financing of the United Nations Mission in East Timor

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

99-81403 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 169: Financing of the United Nations Mission in East Timor

1. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) introduced the Advisory Committee's report on the financing of the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) (A/54/406). The first part of the report addressed the financing needs of phase I (paras. 2-5). The Secretary-General had estimated requirements for phase I at US$ 54,428,400. The Secretary-General had also indicated that voluntary contributions of $47,673,400 had been received as at 27 September 1999. Annex II of the report gave a breakdown of the voluntary contributions. The difference between the voluntary contributions and estimated requirements was $7,155,000 gross, the amount being requested by the Secretary-General. In paragraph 5 the Advisory Committee recommended approval of an assessment on Member States of that amount.

2. The second part of the report (paras. 6-10) addressed phase II. The Advisory Committee noted that preliminary resource requirements for phase II amounted to $38,037,100 gross, largely reflecting the need to replace 50 per cent of the phase I equipment, which had been destroyed or had disappeared. The Secretariat would prepare a study in due course and submit a report thereon to the General Assembly. Meanwhile, the Advisory Committee, on the basis of the information contained in the Secretary-General's report and provided orally, recommended approval of the estimates for phase II. The Secretary-General was not requesting an appropriation, but commitment authority. The Advisory Committee had already granted the Secretary-General commitment authority of $10 million. The Secretary-General was now requesting authority to enter into commitments in an amount not to exceed $28,037,100 gross ($27,080,700 net). In conclusion, he drew attention to the Advisory Committee's observations in paragraph 11 of its report.

3. **Mr. Sareva** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and, in addition, Iceland, said that, from the outset, the European Union had supported efforts to bring peace to East Timor and the establishment of UNAMET. Subsequently, it had warmly welcomed the result of the popular consultation held on 30 August 1999. After the recent painful events, it expected that East Timor would achieve independence without delay, as provided for in the agreement of 5 May 1999.

4. The European Union looked forward to the presentation of the Secretary-General's plans for the establishment of a United Nations transitional administration in East Timor, incorporating a United Nations peacekeeping operation, which would be deployed in phase III. In the meantime, it expected that the financing needs of phases I and II would be met.

5. The European Union supported the Secretary-General's requests for approval of an assessment and the authority to enter into additional commitments, as contained in document A/54/380 and as recommended by the Advisory Committee. It noted that those requests did not address phase III or any financing matters related to the establishment of the multinational force.

6. He supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the estimates for phase II should not be reduced, since they were preliminary and subject to amendment once the financing needs of UNAMET had been assessed in more detail. The current situation in the Mission area did not allow for the preparation of fully detailed estimates. He looked forward to the issuance of another report by the Secretary-General including revised estimates for the requirements of phase II.

7. Lastly, the European Union believed that, pursuant to Article 17, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations, the expenses of UNAMET were expenses of the Organization, which were to be borne by the Member States as apportioned by the General Assembly.

8. **Mr. Fox** (Australia), speaking on behalf of Australia, Canada and New Zealand, said that the Secretary-General had requested a revised appropriation of $54.4 million and an assessment of some $7 million to finance phase I of UNAMET, the purpose of which had been to organize and conduct the popular consultation on independence for East Timor. The Secretary-General had also requested the authority to enter into additional commitments of $28 million under phase II, the purpose of which was to prepare the groundwork for the implementation of the independence decision. The Secretary-General's report contained no requests in relation to phase III of UNAMET, for the financing of the transitional administration in East Timor.

9. It was important to clarify that the financing of UNAMET was totally distinct from the financing of the United Nations multinational force in East Timor. That force, which Australia had the honour to lead, would facilitate the work of UNAMET by restoring peace and security in East Timor, but was funded by the parties of which it was composed.

10. The estimates for phase II of UNAMET were preliminary. That was inevitable, since the full extent of the need to replace the Mission's original assets would not be known until a full assessment had been done. The current estimates were based on the assumption that half of the Mission's vehicles and equipment would have to be replaced; the final figures could well be higher.

11. Phase I of UNAMET had been funded largely through voluntary contributions, owing to the need to move quickly to establish the Mission. The Governments of Australia, Canada and New Zealand had contributed substantial resources to the Mission, and the Australian Government had made a contribution in kind for phase II valued at $2.7 million. However, he emphasized that it was important for Member States to bear the costs of the activities of the Organization, in line with Article 17, paragraph 2, of the Charter. He therefore expected that the expenses of phase II and subsequent phases of UNAMET would be apportioned among the Member States, in accordance with the agreed mechanism established by paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 53/240. Australia, Canada and New Zealand strongly agreed with the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the Secretary-General's requests should be granted.

12. **Ms. Merchant** (Norway) commended the sustained efforts of the Secretary-General to find a comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor. Her delegation strongly supported the civilian United Nations presence in the area and had contributed US$ 500,000 to the trust fund for the settlement of the question of East Timor in May 1999.

13. She noted that during phase I of the Mission's operations, ending on 30 September 1999, voluntary contributions paid and pledged had amounted to some $47 million, leaving the amount to be assessed at $7 million gross. Her delegation recommended approval of the request by the Secretary-General to assess that amount, to be apportioned among Member States in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 53/240.

14. In the light of the most recent developments in East Timor, it was crucial that the Mission should fully implement phase II, covering the period 1 October-30 November 1999. Her delegation supported the recommendation by the Advisory Committee that, under the circumstances, there should be no reduction of the preliminary estimates for phase II of the Mission. Her delegation therefore agreed to grant the Secretary-General the authority to enter into commitments to a total of $28 million for phase II, in addition to the commitment authority of $10 million already granted by the Advisory Committee. In that connection, her delegation announced that it would be making another contribution of $500,000 to the trust fund, in support of efforts to bring peace to East Timor. Including the above-mentioned contributions, her Government had so far disbursed over $5 million through different United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations, half of which had been channelled through the United Nations. It had also contributed five officers to the International Force, East Timor, and would naturally be considering further financial support for the people of East Timor.

15. **Mr. Garnier** (France) drew attention to two important errors in the French version of the Advisory Committee's report (A/54/406). The first appeared in the first sentence of paragraph 10, which, unlike the original English as orally confirmed by the Chairman, stated that the Advisory Committee recommended a reduction in the estimates of phase II. The second error was in annex II, where the French version of the list of voluntary contributions differed from that in the English version. In any case, the figure relating to France was incorrect in the original text. Although it was understandable that the translation services had had little time to translate the report, he requested that a revised version of the French should be issued, given that the session had just started and that the errors in the French text were significant.

16. **Mr. Oratmangun** (Indonesia) wished to stress that the signing of the Agreement of 5 May 1999 had resulted from a series of bold and innovative initiatives by President B. J. Habibie, who had made the resolution of the question of East Timor one of the Indonesian Government's top priorities. From the beginning, the Government had cooperated with the United Nations, not only during negotiations but also in fulfilling its commitments under the Agreement. In the light of the results of the popular consultation, it was the Government's responsibility and commitment to fulfil the expressed will of the majority of East Timorese to seek a new destiny separate from the Republic of Indonesia. It would abide by that commitment and at the same time ensure that the parting of the ways would proceed honourably, peacefully and amicably. The Government had, indeed, extended its cooperation in efforts beyond those outlined in the Agreement, with the aim of creating an environment more conducive to the success of the Mission. The Government had also formally commended the efforts made by the Mission, working in cooperation with Indonesia.

17. Unfortunately, the follow-up to the popular consultation had at times been marked by frustrations,

mistakes and disappointments, due largely to the lack of sensitivity and impartiality of certain Mission personnel when faced with conditions on the ground. He recalled that the Secretary-General and the United Nations apparatus were expected to present the Organization as a forum of countries, reflecting its universality and impartiality. Failure to do so would affect the trust of Member States. From the outset the Government had drawn the Secretariat's attention, through correspondence and press releases, to the difficulties facing the deployment of the Mission. For any United Nations mission to achieve its goal, it was crucial that the personnel should adhere to a code of conduct as representatives of the United Nations. That included putting neutrality above all else, thus safeguarding the Mission's credibility, and maintaining sensitivity to the prevailing conditions on the ground. For such principles to be respected, it was important to ensure that United Nations missions comprised personnel from a wide range of countries, geographically diverse and maintaining a universal and international character.

18. While aware of the need for efficiency measures both within the Secretariat and on missions in the field, his delegation sought clarification on the estimated savings of $1 million on premises, which was a remarkable achievement by the Secretariat. The report failed to note, however, how the savings would be achieved.

19. **Mr. Takahara** (Japan) commended the decision by the Indonesian Government to hold a direct ballot for the peaceful solution of the East Timor issue and its decision to accept international peacekeeping forces. On the other hand, in view of what had happened after the ballot, it was a matter of concern to restore security in East Timor and improve the situation of refugees and displaced persons both within and outside East Timor.

20. In that context, his Government had provided and intended to continue providing as much assistance as possible for a peaceful solution and the stabilization of the situation. Its financial, material and personnel assistance included a contribution of $10 million to the trust fund for the settlement of the question of East Timor, the dispatch of personnel to the Mission and emergency assistance of $2 million to support the activities of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme. The Government had also announced that it would contribute approximately $100 million to the trust fund for the multinational force in East Timor, with a view to helping developing countries participate in the force. It would make a further contribution in the area of humanitarian assistance, as well as assistance for the reconstruction and development of East Timor in the middle to long term. It was to be hoped that the situation would be stabilized at the earliest possible moment, through the activities of the multinational force, in coordination with the Indonesian Government and armed forces.

21. In the same context, his delegation attached great importance to the Mission's activities and hoped that the responsibilities entrusted to it would be successfully discharged, in view of the efforts made by the international community, including Indonesia and the countries participating in the multinational force. His delegation therefore hoped that the General Assembly would take action as soon as possible on the financing of the Mission, which was the collective responsibility of Member States, on the basis of the reports of the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee, in order to provide the Mission with a sound financial base enabling it to meet its responsibilities effectively.

22. **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) expressed her delegation's political support for the United Nations Mission in East Timor. In view of the procedures required for financing the Mission and the concerns which her delegation had expressed when the Committee had begun its consideration of the topic, she reaffirmed her delegation's position that activities and programmes established under the mandate of the United Nations should be funded by Member States in conformity with Article 17 of the Charter of the United Nations. She would revert to the question of voluntary contributions, with a view to exploring the matter more thoroughly, at an appropriate moment during the current session.

23. **Mr. Sach** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), replying to the question from the representative of Indonesia about the data in annex I of the Secretary-General's report on the financing of the United Nations Mission in East Timor (A/54/380), said that the figures in the first column relating to premises and accommodation in the operational costs category ($2,043,100) were estimates for phase I of the operation; the second column contained estimates for the period 1-30 September 1999; and the third contained savings estimated to amount to $1 million owing to the fact that the host Government had provided premises in both Dili and Bali.

24. With regard to the data contained in annex II of the Advisory Committee's report (A/54/406), he said that although the total was correct the figures showing the contributions of each country to the trust fund were wrong and a correction would be issued listing the actual contributions. In the reissue of the French version the mistake in paragraph 10 would also be corrected.

The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.